

# The Disappearing Teacher

## A Survey of Former Tennessee Public Teachers

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# Our Purpose in Studying Teacher Education

- Teachers are the lynchpin of the education system.
- The teachers that our colleges and universities produce prepare our future students.
- Teachers are the common thread in a seamless link within the sectors of P-16 education.

# The Tennessee Education Landscape

- Only about one in five Tennessee adults holds a bachelors degree compared to national rates of one in every four citizens (SREB 2000).
- According to *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, Tennessee had a high school graduation rate of 54.9% in 1999 ranking 48th in the country.

# The Tennessee Education Landscape

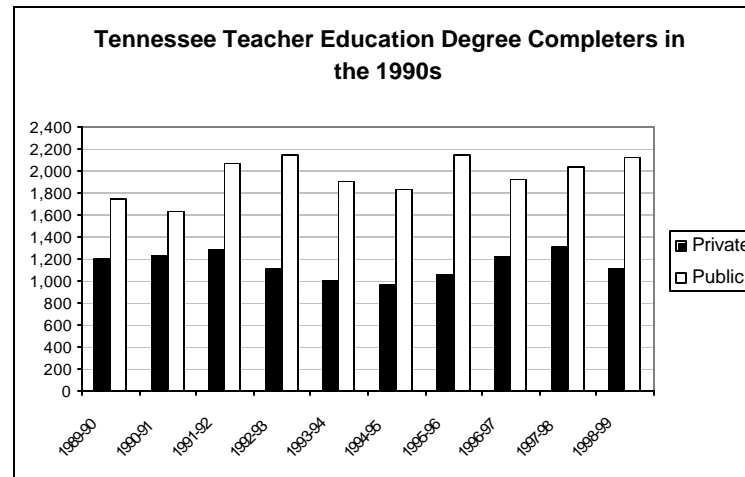
- The chance for college for Tennesseans by age 19 is 33.3%, placing the state 44th, well below the national average of 38.8% (*Postsecondary Education Opportunity*).
- The proportion of adults with a high school education is 80%, ranking 11th in the Southern Region, 4% below the national average (SREB 2000).

# The Tennessee Education Landscape

- With such low educational attainment levels, a well-trained teacher workforce is essential for our education system to achieve high levels of quality.

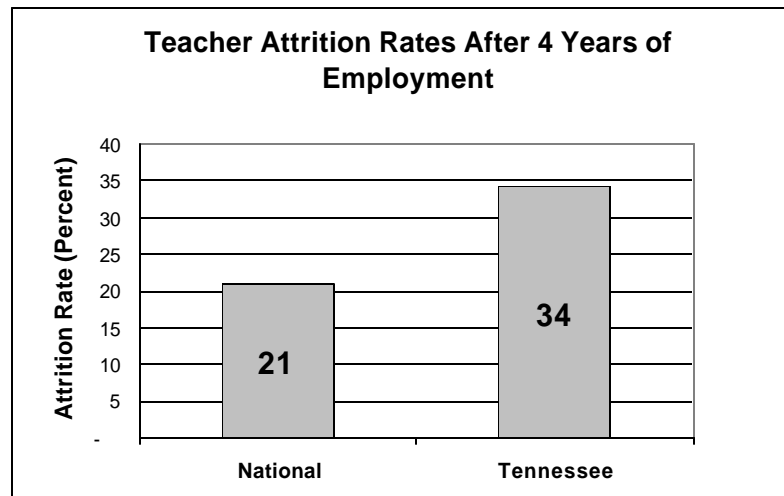
# The Teacher Supply

- During the 1990s Tennessee institutions of higher learning produced an annual average of over 3,000 students ready to enter Tennessee K-12 schools.



# Teacher Attrition

- Alarmingly, almost 34% of new teachers in Tennessee leave the profession within four years (SREB 2000).



*Data from  
NCES 2000 and  
SREB 2000*

# Variables in Teacher Retention

- Training in a five year program versus a four year program
  - Darling-Hammond 2000; Johnson, et al 1993; Schaffer 1992
- Personal and Family Variables
  - NCES 1998; Stinebrickner 1997
- Salary
  - NCES 2000; Murnane & Olsen 1990



## Design

- The survey was modeled after a National Center for Education Statistics report.
- The survey was administered following Dillman's total design method.
- Each survey was numbered so that responses could be identified with teacher demographics from the State Department of Education.
- A complete follow-up was sent to non-respondents.

## Survey Population

- Population size of 2,287
- Sample size of 558 former TN teachers.
- Received 193 responses.

# Question 1

Are you currently teaching?

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 53     | 27.5%   |
| No       | 140    | 72.5%   |

Yes I am teaching in the state of \_\_\_\_\_?

| States where respondents<br>are currently teaching |        |
|--|--------|
| Location   | Number |
| Georgia  | 9      |
| Mississippi  | 3      |
| Kentucky   | 3      |
| Virginia   | 3      |
| Alabama  | 3      |
| 17 Other States                                    | 1 or 2 |
| Total -Other States                                | 43     |
| TN Private/Postsecondary                           | 10     |

## Question 2

If you could go back to your college days and start over, would you become a teacher again?

| Response       | Number | Percent |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| Definitely Yes | 52     | 26.9%   |
| Probably Yes   | 72     | 37.3%   |
| Probably No    | 46     | 23.8%   |
| Definitely No  | 21     | 10.9%   |
| Blank          | 2      | 1.0%    |

## Question 3

If you are not teaching, do you plan on returning to the teaching profession?

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 71     | 55.50%  |
| No       | 57     | 44.50%  |

If so, when?

| Response          | Number | Percent |
|-------------------|--------|---------|
| Next Year         | 14     | 18.9%   |
| 2-4 years         | 22     | 29.7%   |
| More than 5 years | 17     | 23.0%   |
| Not sure          | 21     | 28.4%   |
| Total             | 74     | 100.0%  |

## Question 5

How would you rate the effectiveness of your teacher preparation coursework at preparing you as a teacher in the following areas?

|                    | Content<br>Knowledge | Teaching<br>Skills | Classroom<br>Management | Overall      |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Very effective     | 118                  | 85                 | 57                      | 70           |
| Somewhat effective | 62                   | 80                 | 77                      | 102          |
| Not effective      | 12                   | 26                 | 58                      | 17           |
| Blank              | 1                    | 2                  | 1                       | 4            |
| Weighted Score     | <b>2.552</b>         | <b>2.309</b>       | <b>1.995</b>            | <b>2.280</b> |

**NOTE:** Weighted score is computed by assigning a 3 to answers of very effective, 2 to answers of somewhat effective, etc. then dividing by the total number of responses.

## Question 6

How would you rate the effectiveness of your practical training at preparing you in the following areas?

|                    | Content<br>Knowledge | Teaching<br>Skills | Classroom<br>Management | Overall      |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Very effective     | 101                  | 116                | 96                      | 96           |
| Somewhat effective | 76                   | 62                 | 73                      | 77           |
| Not effective      | 15                   | 13                 | 22                      | 13           |
| Blank              | 1                    | 2                  | 2                       | 7            |
| Weighted Score     | <b>2.448</b>         | <b>2.539</b>       | <b>2.387</b>            | <b>2.446</b> |

**NOTE:** Weighted score is computed by assigning a 3 to answers of very effective, 2 to answers of somewhat effective, etc. then dividing by the total number of responses.

# Question 11

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following characteristics of the the environment at your most recent school of employment?

| Rank Order                         | Weighted Score | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|
| Student learning environment       | 2.876          | 30             | 104       | 43           | 14                |
| School Instructional Programs      | 2.778          | 23             | 107       | 40           | 21                |
| .....                              |                |                |           |              |                   |
| .....                              |                |                |           |              |                   |
| Salary and benefits                | 2.438          | 10             | 82        | 67           | 31                |
| Professional prestige for teachers | 2.303          | 13             | 72        | 54           | 50                |

**NOTE: Weighted score is computed by assigning a 4 to answers of very satisfied, 3 to answers of satisfied, etc. then dividing by the total number of responses.**



## Question 12

What are the primary reasons that you decided not to continue teaching as a career? (Check all that apply)

| Rank Order                            | Number | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Child rearing/ Pregnancy              | 73     | 37.8%   |
| Dissatisfied with teaching            | 70     | 36.3%   |
| Dissatisfaction with salary, benefits | 69     | 35.8%   |
| Other                                 | 63     | 32.6%   |
| Moved or Relocated                    | 40     | 20.7%   |
| Career outside education              | 40     | 20.7%   |
| Teaching in another state             | 36     | 18.7%   |
| School staffing action                | 22     | 11.4%   |
| Taking courses for education career   | 12     | 6.2%    |
| Health/Disability                     | 5      | 2.6%    |
| No interest in teaching               | 5      | 2.6%    |
| Move into administration              | 4      | 2.1%    |

## Question 12 (Continued)

| <b>Reason for Leaving</b>             | <b>Number</b> | <b>Plan to Return</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Child rearing/Pregnancy               | 73            | 45                    | <b>61.6%</b>   |
| Dissatisfaction with Teaching         | 69            | 19                    | <b>27.5%</b>   |
| Dissatisfaction with Salary, Benefits | 70            | 15                    | <b>21.4%</b>   |

## Questions 14 and 15

Have you participated in a professional development program at your most recent school of employment?

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 151    | 78.24%  |
| No       | 40     | 20.73%  |
| Blank    | 2      | 1.04%   |

Were you provided with a mentor when you were a beginning teacher?

| Response | Number | Percent |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Yes      | 108    | 55.96%  |
| No       | 84     | 43.52%  |
| Blank    | 2      | 1.04%   |

## Question 16

If applicable, how would you rate the effectiveness of your mentoring program at preparing you in the following areas?

|                    | Content<br>Knowledge | Teaching<br>Skills | Classroom<br>Management | Overall      |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Very effective     | 39                   | 40                 | 41                      | 37           |
| Somewhat effective | 37                   | 41                 | 35                      | 40           |
| Not effective      | 31                   | 27                 | 32                      | 29           |
| Weighted Score     | <b>2.075</b>         | <b>2.120</b>       | <b>2.083</b>            | <b>2.075</b> |

**NOTE:** Weighted score is computed by assigning a 3 to answers of very effective, 2 to answers of somewhat effective, etc. then dividing by the total number of responses.

# Conclusions

- Three primary reasons were selected as reasons for leaving the profession:
  - Child rearing/pregnancy
  - Dissatisfaction with teaching
  - Dissatisfaction with salary & benefits
- Compensation from salary and benefits is an important variable in retaining new teachers.

# Conclusions

- Teachers responded that their teacher preparation programs were effective in preparing them for the profession.
- A healthy percentage of those leaving the teaching profession plan to return.
- Literature reveals that mentoring is an effective tool for new teacher retention. However, results show an apparent lack of widespread and quality mentoring in Tennessee.

# The IR Connection

